

National Interest Exception Travel

Students, Business Travelers, Investors, and Academics

Eligible Travelers

As of March 2, 2021, Washington announced that certain travelers from Schengen area countries could resume traveling to the United States if, as determined by a Consular Officer, they qualify for a National Interest Exception (NIE) to Presidential Proclamation 10143 that suspended routine travel from the Schengen Area to the United States. The following travelers may apply to be considered for an NIE:

Economic purpose: Vital support of critical infrastructure sectors as defined by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or critical infrastructure linked supply chain. The DHS-defined critical infrastructure sectors are:

- chemical
- commercial facilities
- communications
- critical manufacturing
- dams
- defense industrial base
- emergency services
- energy
- financial services
- food and agriculture
- government facilities
- healthcare and public health
- information technology
- nuclear reactors
- transportation
- water/wastewater systems

For more information on the DHS critical infrastructure sectors, please see

<https://www.cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-sectors>

Attention: *Senior executives and managers traveling to observe operations, hold regular meetings with U.S. clients, and/or for routine operational travel will **no longer** be considered eligible for a NIE.*

Students: All students, and their dependents, traveling to the United States to:

- Pursue a full course of study per INA 101(a)(15)(F);
- Pursue a full course of study per INA 101(a)(15)(M); or
- Participate in an exchange program as a bona fide student.

Academics: All exchange visitors and their dependents traveling to the United States under INA 101(a)(15)(J) in the following categories:

- Professors
- Research Scholars
- Short Term Scholars
- Specialists

Au pairs: Exchange program applicants who will travel as an au pair:

- to provide care for a minor U.S. citizen, lawful permanent resident, or nonimmigrant in lawful status and who possesses special skills required for a child with particular needs (e.g., medical, special education, or sign language);
- to prevent a U.S. citizen, lawful permanent resident, or other nonimmigrant in lawful status from becoming a public health charge or ward of the state of a medical or other public funded institution; or
- to provide childcare services for a child whose parents are involved with the provision of medical care to individuals who have contracted COVID-19 or medical research at U.S. facilities to help the U.S. combat COVID-19.

Exchange visitors: J-1 visa applicants who travel to participate in a Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) identified exchange visitor programs for interns, summer work and travel, camp counselors, trainees, or teachers only if described below:

- An exchange program conducted pursuant to a bilateral agreement or other arrangement with a foreign government if the agreement or arrangement with the foreign government was in effect prior to June 24, 2020;
- Interns and Trainees on U.S. government agency-sponsored programs with a program number beginning with “G-3” on Form DS-2019;
- Specialized Teachers in Accredited Educational Institutions with a program number beginning with “G-5” on Form DS-2019; or
- An exchange program that fulfills critical and time sensitive foreign policy objectives as determined by the Department.

Pilots and air crew traveling for training, or aircraft pickup, delivery, or maintenance.

Certain other travelers may be eligible for a national interest exception for the following scenarios:

- Urgent Medical: Lifesaving medical treatment for the principal applicant and accompanying close family members.
- Public Health: Travel as a public health or healthcare professional or researcher to alleviate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, or to continue ongoing research in an area with substantial public health benefit.
- Humanitarian: Travel to the United States to provide care for a U.S. citizen, legal permanent resident, or other nonimmigrant-in-lawful-status close family member, to include alleviating the burden of care from a medical or other institution.
- Medical escorts, legal guardians, or other escorts required by an airline or legally required by a foreign medical or law enforcement entity.
- Information media representatives and journalists traveling on I visas.

- Derivative spouses and minor children in visa categories carrying eligibility for derivative status and whose principal applicant is currently in the United States or possessing a valid NIE.

Athletes and their supporting staff should contact Customs and Border Protection (CBP), not the Embassy, regarding their eligibility for a National Interest Exception.

While the Embassy will process National Interest Exception (NIE) requests as soon as practicable, there is likely to be increased wait times due to substantial backlogs. **The Embassy cannot accept NIE requests for individuals who are currently physically present in the United States.** If you are currently in the United States and seek to depart and re-enter the United States later, you should carefully consider your travel plans, understanding that there is no guarantee that you will be given a NIE to re-enter the United States within your expected travel dates.

Travelers with Valid Visas

Travelers that already have valid visas are required to verify that they qualify for a National Interest Exception (NIE) before they are permitted to travel to the United States. **To do so, travelers must send the following information and documentation to the Embassy. As noted above, the Embassy cannot accept NIE requests for individuals who are currently physically present in the United States.**

NOTE: F and M visa holders with a valid I-20 do not need to be re-approved for each entry to the United States. F and J travelers are reminded that they must still meet all Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) requirements.

Please include the following information in the e-mail (to usconsular.budapest@state.gov)

- The subject line of your e-mail should include: “NIE request” and your full name or Appointment requests should state: “Appointment request” and your full name,
- Name as it appears on passport,
- Current location (city, state/region, country),
- Date exited the United States (if applicable),
- Reason exited the United States (if applicable),
- Date of proposed entry to the United States,
- Reason for entry to the United States,
- If applicable, the Critical Infrastructure Field per Department of Homeland Security (<https://www.cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-sectors>),
- Phone number of the traveler, and
- Email of the traveler.

Please attach the following documentation to the e-mail

- Photo/scan of your passport biographic page,
- Photo/scan of your valid U.S. visa,
- I-20, DS-2019, I-797 (whichever is applicable to you), and

- If applicable, additional supporting documentation in English, such as a letter outlining your qualifications and travel purpose.

While the Embassy will process NIE requests as soon as practicable, there is likely to be increased wait times due to substantial backlogs. Please allow up to **10 days** to review your documents and qualifications. You will be notified by e-mail if you meet the NIE requirements. Print out that e-mail as confirmation of your excepted status.

Travelers with ESTA

Travelers that already have a valid ESTA are required to verify that they qualify for a National Interest Exception (NIE) before they are permitted to travel to the United States. **To do so, travelers must send the following documentation and information to the Embassy. As noted above, the Embassy cannot accept NIE requests for individuals who are currently physically present in the United States.**

Information about the status of ESTA registrations is provided through the official ESTA website.

NOTE: Tourism travel to the United States continues to be suspended.

Please include the following information in the e-mail (to usconsular.budapest@state.gov)

- The subject line of your e-mail should include: “NIE request” and your full name or Appointment requests should state: “Appointment request” and your full name,
- Name as it appears on passport,
- Current location (city, state/region, country),
- Date exited the United States (if applicable),
- Reason exited the United States (if applicable),
- Date of proposed entry to the United States,
- Reason for entry to the United States,
- If applicable, the Critical Infrastructure Field per Department of Homeland Security (<https://www.cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-sectors>),
- Phone number of the traveler, and
- Email of the traveler.

Please attach the following documentation to the e-mail

- Photo/scan of your passport biographic page,
- Photo/scan of your valid ESTA authorization, and
- If applicable, additional supporting documentation in English, such as a letter outlining your qualifications and travel purpose.

While the Embassy will process NIE requests as soon as practicable, there is likely to be increased wait times due to substantial backlogs. Please allow up to **10 days** to review your documents and qualifications. You will be notified by e-mail if you meet the NIE requirements. Print out that e-mail as confirmation of your excepted status.

Travelers without a Visa

Travelers that do not yet have their required visas and that they fall in to one of the excepted travel statuses (see above for categories) should apply for their visas as normal. Please visit <http://cdn.ustraveldocs.com/hu/index.html> or <http://travel.state.gov> to begin your application process.

NOTE: Tourism travel to the United States continues to be suspended.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States Embassy in Budapest remains unable to resume routine visa operations. We are currently offering as many appointments as resources and safety allow. Due to immigrant visa prioritization, the Embassy has a reduced capacity to process nonimmigrant visas. We do not currently envision being able to offer any routine nonimmigrant visa appointments, including for petition-based employment visas, student visas, exchange visitor visas, or business/tourist visas based.

If you have an urgent need to travel, including after-sales, commissioning, and installation specialists and technicians, you may request an expedited appointment online at usconsular.budapest@state.gov. In your request, please explain in detail your qualifications for a NIE and be prepared to provide supporting documentation via email, if requested by the Embassy.

Limitations of NIE Travel

The exception is valid only for 30 days from the date of approval and is valid for a single entry to the United States. An individual who departs the United States and wishes to return must be re-assessed for a national interest exception.

NOTE: F and M visa holders with a valid I-20 do not need to be re-approved for each entry to the United States. F and J travelers are reminded that they must still meet all Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) requirements.

All airline passengers to the U.S. ages two years and older must provide a negative COVID-19 viral test taken within three calendar days of travel. Alternatively, travelers to the U.S. may provide documentation from a licensed health care provider of having recovered from COVID-19 in the 90 days preceding travel. Check the CDC website for additional information and [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

All individuals are reminded that their admission remains subject to a determination by Customs and Border Protection officers at ports of entry.